

VZCZCXRO2882
OO RUEHIK
DE RUEHPS #0546/01 3441632
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 101632Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY PRISTINA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9540
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1293
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1830
RHFMIUU/AFSOUTH NAPLES IT
RHMFISS/CDR TF FALCON
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEPGEA/CDR650THMIGP SHAPE BE
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHDC
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUZEJAA/USNIC PRISTINA SR

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000546

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PGI, EEB/TRA/AN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [CNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [KV](#) [SR](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: AIRSPACE CONTROL MORE THAN TECHNICAL ISSUE

PRISTINA 00000546 001.2 OF 002

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Kosovo's Civil Aviation Authority has expressed growing concerns to us about NATO-led negotiations regarding control of the airspace over Kosovo. NATO still retains full authority over Kosovo's airspace, but recently announced that it will release control of upper airspace to allow for commercial overflight. Under NATO's preliminary proposal, Albania, Serbia and Macedonia, would be jointly responsible and each would administer a portion of Kosovo's airspace. Kosovo officials told us that they will not agree to any plan that cedes authority over any portion of Kosovo airspace to Serbia. They also complained that NATO was not considering adequately Kosovo's views as it moved forward with its plans to relinquish control of Kosovo's airspace. NATO negotiators must remain cognizant of the political sensitivities surrounding this matter. END SUMMARY

NATO WILL RELEASE CONTROL OF KOSOVO AIRSPACE ...

2. (SBU) Kosovo's Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) contacted us this week to express their growing concern over NATO-led negotiations regarding control of the airspace over Kosovo. NATO still retains full authority over Kosovo's airspace, but recently announced that it will release control of upper airspace (above Flight Level 285, or 28,500 feet) to allow for commercial overflight. Airspace below Flight Level 290 is controlled by NATO, but Pristina International Airport (PIA) provides air traffic control services for the airport's two present approach corridors. PIA air traffic controllers would require additional training to provide control services for commercial overflights, as they are only certified for approaches and takeoff. Since overflight cruising is the simplest flight segment, KCAA officials believe that all necessary training for controllers could be completed in less than 90 days. Overflight revenues are expected to be substantial once flight corridors are established, and the KCAA is eager to move forward.

... BUT NOT TO KOSOVO

3. (SBU) Unfortunately, because not all NATO members recognize

Kosovo's independence, NATO is unwilling to release airspace control directly to the Kosovo government, even with a provision that Kosovo then immediately cede authority to an agreed-upon third party. Instead, NATO has assembled a technical panel that includes members from Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina to work out an alternative acceptable to all parties. At a recent meeting of the technical panel, NATO presented a proposal that would assign Albania, Serbia and Macedonia portions of Kosovo's upper airspace. NATO negotiator Georgio Cioni reportedly told his superiors that NATO's proposal was well received, but Gjonbalaj made clear to us that Kosovo will not agree to any plan that cedes authority over Kosovo airspace to Serbia. Cioni reportedly told Gjonbalaj to think of NATO's proposal as a big cake, where everyone would get a slice. Mr. Gjonbalaj responded that even if that were true, Kosovo is not NATO's cake to slice up.

KOSOVO FEELS SERBIA WOULD NOT BE HONEST BROKER

¶4. (SBU) Kosovo officials also believe that Serbia cannot be trusted to manage Kosovo's airspace responsibly (i.e., without injecting politics into it or in a manner that benefited Kosovo). Mr. Gjonbalaj cited Serbia's ongoing refusal of overflight privileges to any aircraft with Pristina as part of its flight plan as an example.

Additionally, he noted Serbia recently began charging a 3.3 Euro security tax on all passengers departing from Serbian airports, and that Serbia unilaterally included PIA in this policy despite the fact that Serbia does not provide any services to Pristina. (Note: This particular problem was resolved after KCAA officials wrote directly to the International Air Transport Authority in protest; the tax was removed from Pristina tickets. End Note) As a final example of Serbia's bad faith on airspace and safety issues, Gjonbalaj cited a serious incident roughly 3 years ago when Serbia

PRISTINA 00000546 002.2 OF 002

refused overflight permission to an aircraft with an in-flight emergency that was low on fuel and attempting to divert from Pristina to Sofia, Bulgaria.

COMMENT

¶5. (SBU) Given the political history between Serbia and Kosovo and the specific incidents mentioned above, Kosovo sees Serbian involvement in their airspace as an absolute showstopper. They appear willing to cede such authority to Albania or Macedonia, however. We believe Italy could also be an acceptable option for Kosovo, as the radar and radio facilities in Brindisi are (according to KCAA staff) robust enough to cover all of Kosovo airspace. That said, Kosovo authorities may insist that NATO transfer authority for Kosovo's airspace directly to Kosovo itself and that Kosovo then cede authority to a third country. At this point in the NATO-led process, Kosovo's representatives at the technical panel feel their voices are not being heard. NATO negotiators must keep in mind the political sensitivities surrounding the matter; we share the opinion of Kosovo officials that while compromise is necessary, including Serbia would be inappropriate.

DELL